

NAN of MUSIC MOUNTAIN

By Frank H. Spearman
Author of Whispering Smith

NAN MORGAN AND DE SPAIN DISCOVER THEMSELVES TO BE IN DESPERATE STRAITS WITH REGARD TO THE GAP GANG—THE GIRL FINDS HERSELF IN GRAVE DANGER

Henry de Spain, general manager of the stage-coach line running from Thief River to Sleepy Cat, a railroad division point in the Rocky mountains, is fighting a band of cattle thieves and gunmen living in Morgan gap, a fertile valley twenty miles from Sleepy Cat and near Calabasas, where the coach horses are changed. De Spain has killed two of the gang and has been seriously wounded. Pretty Nan Morgan, niece of the gang leader, and De Spain are secretly in love. When her uncle finds this out he takes steps to marry her to Gale Morgan, a cousin, who is a bad man in every way.

CHAPTER XIX—Continued.

"No," retorted De Spain good-naturedly. "It's not fair. And some day, Duke, you'll be the first to say so. You won't shake hands with me now. I know, so I'll go. But the day will come when you will."

He covered his revolver with his left hand, and replaced it under his coat. The fat man who had been leaning patiently against a barber's chair ten feet from the disputants, stepped forward again lightly as a cat. "Henry," he exclaimed, in a low but urgent tone, his hand extended, "just a minute. There's a long-distance telephone call on the wire for you." He pointed to the office door. "Take the first booth,



He Covered His Revolver With His Left Hand.

Henry. Hello, Duke," he added, greeting Morgan with an extended hand, as De Spain walked back. "How are you making it, old man?"

Duke Morgan grunted. "Sorry to interrupt your talk," continued Lefever. "But the barns at Calabasas are burning—telephone wires from there cut, too—they had to pick up the Thief River trunk line to get a message through. Makes it bad, doesn't it? Lefever pulled a wry face. "Duke, there's somebody yet around Calabasas that needs hanging, isn't there? Yes."

CHAPTER XX.

Gale Persists.

When within an hour De Spain joined Nan, tense with suspense and anxiety, at the hospital, she tried hard to read his news in his face.

"Have you seen him?" she asked eagerly. De Spain nodded. "What does he say?"

"Nothing very reasonable." Her face fell. "I knew he wouldn't. Tell me all about it, Henry—everything."

She listened keenly to each word. De Spain gave her a pretty accurate recital of the interview, and Nan's apprehension grew with her hearing of it.

"I knew it," she repeated with conviction. "I know him better than you know him. What shall we do?"

De Spain took both her hands. He held them against his breast and stood looking into her eyes. When he regarded her in such a way her doubt and fears seemed mean and trivial. He spoke only one word, but there was a world of confidence in his tone: "Stick."

She arched her brows as she returned his gaze, and with a little troubled laugh drew closer. "Stick, Nan," he repeated. "It will come out all right."

She paused a moment. "How can you know?"

"I know because it's got to. I talked it all over with my best friend in Medicine Bend, the other day."

"Who, Henry?"

"Whispering Smith. He laughed at your uncle's opposing us. He said if your uncle only knew it, it's the best thing that could happen for him. And he said if all the marriages opposed by old folks had been stopped, there

wouldn't be young folks enough left to milk the cows."

"Henry, what is this report about the Calabasas barns burning?"

"The old Number One barn is gone and some of the old stables. We didn't lose any horses, and the other barns are all right. Some of our Calabasas or gap friends, probably. No matter, we'll get them all rounded up after a while, Nan. Then, some fine day, we're going to get married."

De Spain rode that night to Calabasas to look into the story of the fire.

McAlpin, swathed in bandages, made no bones about accusing the common enemy. No witnesses could be found to throw any more light on the inquiry than the barn boss himself. And De Spain made only a pretense of a formal investigation. If he had had any doubts about the origin of the fire they would have been resolved by an anonymous scrawl, sent through the mail, promising more if he didn't get out of the country.

But instead of getting out of the country, De Spain continued as a matter of energetic policy to get into it. He rode the deserts stripped, so to say, for action and walked the streets of Sleepy Cat welcoming every chance to meet men from Music Mountain or the sinks. It was on Nan that the real hardships of the situation fell, and Nan who had to bear them alone and almost unaided.

Duke came home a day or two later without a word for Nan concerning his encounter with De Spain. He was shorter in the grain than ever, crustier to everyone than she had ever known him—and toward Nan herself fiercely resentful. Sassoon was in his company a great deal, and Nan knew of old that Sassoon was a bad symptom. Gale, too, came often, and the three were much together. In some way, Nan felt that she herself was in part the subject of their talks, but no information concerning them could she ever get.

One morning she sat on the porch sewing when Gale rode up. He asked for her uncle. Bonita told him Duke had gone to Calabasas. Gale announced he was bound for Calabasas himself, and dismounted near Nan, professing to cinch his saddle. He fussed with the straps for a minute, trying to engage Nan in the interval, without success, in conversation. "Look here, Nan," he said at length, studiously amiable, "don't you think you're pretty hard on me, lately?"

"No, I don't," she answered. "If Uncle Duke didn't make me, I'd never look at you, or speak to you—or live in the same mountains with you."

"I don't think when a fellow cares for you as much as I do, and gets out of patience once in a while, just because he loves a girl the way a red-blooded man can't help loving her, she ought to hold it against him forever. Think she ought to, Nan?" he demanded after a pause. She was sewing and kept silence.

"I think," she responded, showing her aversion in every syllable, "before a man begins to talk red-blood rot, he ought to find out whether the girl cares for him, or just loathes the sight of him."

He regarded her fixedly. Paying no attention to him, but bending in the sunshine over her sewing, her hand flying with the needle, her masses of brown hair sweeping back around her pink ears and curling in stray ringlets that the wind danced with while she worked, she inflamed her brawny cousin's ardent affections. "You used to care for me, Nan. You can't deny that." Her silence was irritating. "Can you?" he demanded. "Come, put up your work and talk it out. I didn't use to have to coax you for a word and a smile. What's come over you?"

"Nothing has come over me, Gale. I did use to like you—when I first came back from school. You seemed so big and fine then, and were so nice to me. I did like you."

"Why didn't you keep on liking me?" Nan made no answer. Her cousin persisted. "You used to talk about thinking the world of me," she said at last; "then I saw you one Frontier day, riding around Sleepy Cat with a carriage full of women."

Gale burst into a huge laugh. Nan's face flushed. She bent over her work. "Oh, that's what's the matter with you, is it?" he demanded jocularly. "You never mentioned that before."

"That isn't the only thing," she continued after a pause.

"Why, that was just some Frontier day fun, Nan. A man's got to be a little bit of a sport once in a while, hasn't he?"

"Not if he likes me." She spoke with an ominous distinctness, but under her breath. He caught her words and laughed again. "Pshaw, I didn't think you'd get jealous over a little thing like that, Nan. When there's a celebration on in town, everybody's friendly with everybody else. If you lay a little thing like that up against me, where would the rest of the men get off? Your strawberry-faced Medicine Bend friend is celebrating in town most of the time."

Her face turned white. "What a falsehood!" she exclaimed hotly. Looking in her, satisfied, he laughed wholeheartedly again. She rose, furious. "It's a falsehood," she repeated, "and I know it."

"I suppose," retorted Gale, regarding her jocosely, "you asked him about it." He had never seen her so angry. She stamped her foot. "How dare you say such a thing! One of those women was at the hospital—she is there yet, and she is going to die there. She told Uncle Duke's nurse the men they knew, and whom they didn't know, at that place. And Henry de Spain, when he heard this miserable creature had been taken to the hospital, and Doctor Torpy said she could never get well, told the sister to take care of her and send the bills to him, because he knew her father and mother in Medicine Bend and went to school with her there when she was a decent girl. Go and hear what she has to say about Henry de Spain, you contemptible falsifier."

Gale laughed sardonically. "That's right. I like to see a girl stick to her friends. De Spain ought to take care of her. Good story."

"And she has other good stories, too, you ought to hear," continued Nan undismayed. "Most of them about you and your fine friends in town. She told the nurse it's you who ought to be paying her bills till she dies."

Gale made a disclaiming face and a deprecating gesture. "No, no, Nan—let De Spain take care of his own. Be a sport yourself, girl, right now." He stepped nearer her. Nan retreated. "Kiss and make up," he exclaimed with a laugh. But she knew he was angry, and knew what to guard against. Still laughing, he sprang toward her and tried to catch her arm.

"Don't touch me!" she cried, jumping away with her hand in her blouse. "You little vixen," he exclaimed with an oath, "what have you got there?" But he halted at her gesture, and Nan, panting, stood her ground.

"Keep away!" she cried.

"Where did you get that knife?" thundered Gale.

"From one who showed me how to use it on a coward!"

He affected amusement and tried to pass the incident off as a joke. But his dissimulation was more dangerous, she knew, than his brutality, and he left her the prey to more than one alarm and the renewed resolve never to be taken off her guard. That night he came back. He told her, glancing admiringly at Nan as he recounted the story, how she had stood her ground against him in the morning.

Nor did Nan like the way her uncle acted while he listened—and afterward. He talked a good deal about Gale and the way she was treating her cousin. When Nan declared she never would have anything to do with him, her uncle told her with disconcerting bluntness to get all that out of her head, for she was going to marry him. When she protested she never would, Duke told her, with many harsh oaths, that she should never marry De Spain even if he had to kill him or get killed to stop it, and that if she had any sense she would get ready to marry her cousin peacefully, adding, that if she didn't have sense, he would see his threats left Nan aghast. For two days she thought them all over. Then



"Keep Away!" She Cried.

she dressed to go to town. On her way to the barn her uncle intercepted her. "Where you going?"

"To Sleepy Cat," returned Nan, regarding him collectedly.

"No, you're not," he announced bluntly.

Nan looked at him in silence. "I don't want you running to town any more to meet De Spain," added Duke, without any attempt to soften his injunction.

"But I've got to go to town once in

a while, whether I meet Henry de Spain or not, Uncle Duke."

"What do you have to go for?"

"Why, for mail, supplies—everything."

"Pardaloe can attend to all that."

Nan shook her head. "Whether he can or not, I'm not going to be cut off from going to Sleepy Cat, Uncle Duke—nor from seeing Henry de Spain."

"Meaning to say you won't obey, eh?"

"When I'm going to marry a man it isn't right to forbid me seeing him."

"You're not going to marry him; you're going to marry Gale, and the quicker you make up your mind to it the better."

"You might better tell me I am going to marry Bull Page—I will marry him first. I will never marry Gale Morgan in the living world, and I've told you so more than once."

He regarded his niece a moment wrathfully and, without replying, walked back to the house. Nan, upset but resolute, went on to the barn and asked Pardaloe to saddle her pony. Pardaloe shuffled around in an obsequious way, but at the end of some evasions admitted he had orders not to do it. Nan flamed at the information. She disliked Pardaloe anyway, not for any reason she could assign beyond the fact that he had once been a "Tom of Gale's. But she was too high-spirited to dispute with him, and returned to the house pink with indignation. Going straight to her uncle, she protested against such tyranny. Duke was insensible alike to her pleas and her threats.

But next morning Nan was up at three o'clock. She made her way into the barn before a soul was stirring, and at daybreak was well on her way to Sleepy Cat. She telephoned to De Spain's office from the hospital and went to breakfast. De Spain joined her before she had finished, and when they left the dining room she explained why she had disappointed him the day before. He heard the story with misgivings.

"I'll tell you how it looks to me, Nan," he said when she had done. "You are like a person that's being bound tighter every day by invisible cords. You don't see them because you are fearless. You are too fearless, Nan," he added, with apprehension reflected in the expression of his face. "I'll tell you what I wish you'd do, and I say it knowing you won't do it," he concluded.

She made light of his fears, twisting his right hand till it was helpless in her two hands and laughing at him. "How do you know I won't do it?"

"Because I've asked you before. This is it: Marry me, now, here, today, and don't take any more chances out there."

"But, Henry," protested Nan, "I can't marry you now and just run away from poor Uncle Duke. If you will just be patient, I'll bring him around to our side."

"Never, Nan."

"Don't be so sure. I know him better than you do, and when he comes for anybody, he comes all at once. Why, it's funny Henry. Now that I'm picking up courage, you're losing it!"

He shook his head. "I don't like the way things are going."

"Dearie," she urged, "should I be any safer at home if I were your wife, than I am as your sweetheart. I don't want to start a horrible family war by running away, and that is just what I certainly should do."

De Spain was unconvinced. But apprehension is short-lived in young hearts. The sun shone, the sky spread a speckless blue over desert and mountains, the day went to their castles and dreams. In a retired corner of the cool dining room at the Mountain house, they lingered together over a long-drawn-out dinner. The better-informed guests by sides indicated their presence to others. They described them as the hardy couple who had first met in a stiff Frontier day rifle match, which the girl had won. Her defeated rival—the man now most regarded and feared in the mountain country—was the man with the reticent mouth, mild eyes, curious birthmark, and with the two little, perplexed wrinkles visible most of the time just between his dark eyebrows, the man listening intently to every syllable that fell from the lips of the trimly bloused, active girl opposite him, leaning forward in her eagerness to tell him things. Her jacket hung over the back of her chair, and she herself was referred to by the more fanciful as queen of the outlaw camp at Music Mountain.

The two were seen together that day about town by many, for the story of their courtship was still veiled in mystery and afforded ground for the widest speculation, while that of their difficulties, and such particulars as De Spain's fruitless efforts to conciliate Duke Morgan and Duke's open threats against De Spain's life were widely known. All these details made the movement and the fate of the young couple the object of keenly curious comment.

In the late afternoon the two rode almost the whole length of Main street together on their way to the river bridge. Everyone knew the horseflesh they bestrode—none cleaner-limbed, harder or faster in the high country. Those that watched them amble slowly past, laughing and talking, intent only on each other, erect, poised and motionless, as if molded to their saddles, often spoke of having seen Nan and her lover that day. It was a long time before they were seen riding down Main street together again.

CHAPTER XXI.

De Spain Worries.

They parted that evening under the shadow of Music Mountain, agreed to meet in Calabasas just as soon as Nan

could get away. She hoped, she told him, to bring good news. De Spain arranged his business to wait at Calabasas for her, and was there, after two days, doing little but waiting and listening to McAlpin's stories about the fire and surmises as to strange men that lurked in and about the place. But De Spain, knowing Jeffries was making an independent investigation into the affair, gave no heed to McAlpin's suspicions.

To get away from the barn boss, De Spain took refuge in riding. The season was drawing on toward winter, and rain clouds drifting at intervals down from the mountains made the saddle a less dependable escape from the monotony of Calabasas. Several days passed with no sight of Nan and no word from her. De Spain, as the hours and days went by, scanned the horizon with increasing solicitude. When he woke on the sixth morning, he was resolved to send a scout into the gap to learn what he could of the situation. The long silence, De Spain knew, portended nothing good. He sent to the stable for Bull Page.

The shambling barman, summoned gruffly by McAlpin, hesitated as he ap-



He Looked at De Spain Tentatively.

peared at the office door and seemed to regard the situation with suspicion. He looked at De Spain tentatively, as if ready either for the discharge with which he was daily threatened or for a renewal of his earlier, friendly relations with the man who had been queer enough to make a place for him. De Spain set Bull down before him in the stuffy little office.

"Bull," he began with apparent frankness, "I want to know how you like your job."

Wiping his mouth guardedly with his hand to play for time and as an introduction to a carefully worded reply, Bull parried. "Mr. de Spain, I want to ask you just one question."

"Go ahead, Bull."

Bull plunged promptly into the suspicion uppermost in his mind. "Has that slaty-eyed, flat-headed, sun-sapped sneak of a Scotchman been complaining of my work? That, Mr. de Spain," emphasized Bull, leaning forward, "is what I want to know first—is it a fair question?"

"Bull," returned De Spain with corresponding and ceremonial emphasis, "it is a fair question between a man and man. I admit it; it is a fair question. And I answer, no, Bull. McAlpin has had nothing on the face of the desert to do with my sending for you. And I add this because I know you want to hear it: he says he couldn't complain of your work, because you never do any."

"That man," persisted Bull, reinforced by the hearty tone and not clearly catching the drift of the very last words, "drinks more liquor than I do."

"He must be some tank, Bull."

"And I don't hide it, Mr. de Spain." "You'd have to crawl under Music Mountain to do that. What I want to know is, do you like your job?"

On this point it was impossible to get an expression from Bull. He felt convinced that De Spain was pressing for an answer only as a preliminary to his discharge. "No matter," interposed the latter, cutting Bull's ramblings short, "drop it, Bull. I want you to do something for me, and I'll pay for it."

Bull, with a palsied smile and a deep, quavering note of gratitude, put up his shaky hand. "Say what, That's all. I've been paid."

"You know you're a sot, Bull."

Bull nodded. "I know it."

"A disgrace to the Maker whose image you were made in."

Bull started, but seemed, on reflection, to consider this a point on which he need not commit himself.

"Still, I believe there's a man in you yet. Something, at any rate, you couldn't completely kill with whisky, Bull—what?"

De Spain, learning that Nan needs him desperately, decides to take some big chances to save her. There's a big development of the story in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Interested.

"Is your boy Josh interested in his studies?" "Yep," replied Farmer Corn-tassel. "Every once in a while he picks up a book and looks it over and says he wishes he knew what it's all about."



106 Fly Poison Cases Reported in 3 Years

A Large Percentage Fatal

Appalling as this record seems, it is only a fraction of the real number. The symptoms of cholera infantum and arsenical poisoning are almost identical. Diagnosis is extremely difficult. Many actual fly poison cases are unrecognized and unreported.

The Government recognizes this danger to childhood and issues this warning, in supplement No. 29 to the Public Health Report:

"Of other fly poisons mentioned, mention should be made, merely for the purpose of condemnation, of those composed of arsenic. Fatal cases of poisoning of children through the use of such compounds are far too frequent, and owing to the resemblance of arsenical poisoning to summer diarrhea and cholera infantum, it is believed that the cases reported to not, by any means, comprise the total. Arsenical fly-destroying devices must be used as extremely dangerous, and should never be used, even if other measures are not at hand."



catches flies and embalmers their disease-bearing bodies with a disinfecting varnish. It is safe, efficient, non-poisonous, and your protector from both fly and fly poisons.

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"Well, my good man, you certainly seem to be out of luck."

"Yes, and money."

Anemic cures Backache, Lumbago, Rheumatism. Send 10c. Dr. V. M. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y., for large trial package.—Adv.

The Natural Way.

"How can guns be fired from a balloon?"

"I guess it's done by a parachute."

If your eyes smart or feel scalded, Roman Eye Balsam applied upon going to bed is just the thing to relieve them. —Adv.

Rats and Fires.

At a time when everyone is complaining of the high cost of living it might be well to see if we cannot eliminate two great sources of waste—fires and rats.

Most fires are needless. All rats are so. Some years ago a study of the rat problem in Philadelphia arrived at the conclusion that the rodents of that city ate more than a million dollars' worth of food each year. At that rate, the disgusting creatures can hardly cost less than \$100,000,000 per year to the whole country. This is a pretty high price to pay for the companionship of impish pests which, besides their other bad habits, undermine floors and carry the most dreaded of all diseases, bubonic plague.

Yet fires are more expensive than rats. In 1915—the last year for which figures are at hand—the American people paid out in premiums for fire insurance \$419,361,346. Of this vast sum at least three-fourths could be saved by reducing our fire record to the rate prevailing in England, France or Germany; and even in our time and nation \$300,000,000 per year is a saving worth noting, and one which would have a perceptible effect on the cost of living.

Philadelphians last year paid \$15,000,000 in corporation and income taxes.

San Francisco has 18,751 school-children who have a total of \$328,289.86 in savings banks.

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contains the rich supplies of phosphate of potash grown in wheat and barley. Its mission is therefore clear and plain—it supplies what ordinary food lacks.

And it does its work in a sturdy, straightforward, dependable way, as tens of thousands of its users can testify.

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